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AUTHOR Martin, Sylvia S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that music is a non-intrusive medium for promoting social interaction among young children. The paper presents examples of music as an "inclusion facilitator"--an occurrence that supports and encourages the interaction and learning of all children, with or without disabilities, but does not disrupt the children's natural environment. In this scenario, there is no formal music lesson; rather, music is the context in which different types of learning occur. General skills for all children and specific skills for children with disabilities are addressed within the music activity. The paper provides examples of the use of music as an inclusion facilitator based on the literature of music use and how music may be viewed contextually as a performance partnership. (Contains 18 references.) (EV)

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Music and Inclusion:

A Performance Partnership

Sylvia S. Martin

University of Houston-Clear Lake

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Abstract

Music is a non-intrusive medium for promoting social interaction among young children. This paper presents examples of music as an "inclusion facilitator" to sustain participation and promote cooperation resulting in the performance of motor skills by preschool children with and without disabilities.

MUSIC AND INCLUSION: A PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP

Sylvia S. Martin

University of Houston-Clear Lake

Music is often used by teachers as a medium for promoting learning and social interaction among young children. Music has been discussed as a context to encourage cooperative activities, to maintain group activities, to aid in problem solving, to assist in learning routines, to expand memorization skills, to promote good feelings about self and others, to indicate readiness to take part in group activities, to accept the suggestions of the group, and to reduce anxiety and promote trust (Achilles, 1999; Andress, 1991; Cooper & McEvoy, M. A., 1996; Gunsberg, A., 1991; Hildebrandt, 1998; Hitz, 1987; Honig, 1995; Jalong, 1996; McEvoy, Twardosz, & Bishop,1990; Twardosz, Nordquist, Simon, & Botkin, 1983).

A review of the literature lends support for using music as an "inclusion facilitator." An inclusion facilitator as used in this paper is an environmental occurrence, or happening, that supports and encourages the interaction and learning of all children, with or without disabilities, but does not disrupt the children's natural environment (Baker, Heard, & Martin, 2001; Blanchard & Martin, 1999; Martin & Blanchard, 2000; Martin & Blanchard, 2001). In this scenario, there is no formal music lesson but rather music is the context in which different types of learning occur. General skills for all children and specific skills for children with disabilities are addressed within the music activity. The music activity is the context for the learning, the "inclusion facilitator." The remainder of this paper will provide examples based on the literature of music use and how music may be viewed contextually as a performance partnership.

Music is used as a signal to begin an activity or to transition to another activity. The teacher incorporates the music into the daily schedule adding an interesting dimension by beating a drum, playing chimes or chanting what the children should do. In this way, children who do not have the cognitive skills or language comprehension skills because of delays or disability can respond to the routine of the classroom through the music. This approach creates group cohesion and promotes the inclusion of all children.

Music is used to define the play. The teacher unifies the play through the use of chant or song. The children act out the play as described by the song or chant by the teacher. The repetition of this play becomes more coordinated, more cooperative and aligned to the rhythm of the song or teacher chant (e.g., *Eency, weency spide*r; *Ring around the rosy; Farmer in the dell*). Most cultures and languages have a tradition of children's songs involving coordinated and often cooperative action by the children. Including a language/cultural perspective (e.g. *De Colores; Frere Jacques*) offers opportunities for multicultural skills addressing ethnic and language diversity.

Music activities evoke emotions of safety and trust, self-confidence and competence. Chant can be used to describe what the whole group or one child is doing (*Jose is smiling a happy smile*) and in this way feelings can be identified and even expanded into why the feeling is occurring (*Katya is sad because her Mama is gone*). This approach not only expands vocabulary, but also allows for correct identification of feelings and probable reasons for the feeling. Children are soothed by traditional lullabies (e.g., *All the pretty little horses; Durme, durme, hermozo hijico*). Children feel recognized by the substitution of their names in songs (e.g., in *BINGO use MARIA*) and children feel connected when the teacher sings what they are doing (Jan is building

blocks today). Music assists in learning routines and ensuring compliance thereby creating a consistent and supportive context for learning (*This is the way we brush our teeth*; Hi, *ho, hi, ho, it's to the play yard we go*).

Songs instill in children a love of the sounds of their language, of the poetry and imagery of their national and cultural music. Songs often increase the memory skills of the child through the repetition and length of phrases that don't necessarily make sense (*Hush little baby, don't say a word, Papa's going to buy you a mockingbird. If that mocking bird won't sing, Papa's going to buy you a diamond ring.*) Music assists children in learning the sounds, patterns, and common phrases of their language. Music, songs and chants are used to practice motor skills. By simply adding a cooperative aspect to the song/chant, a social interaction component of learning is added. Below is a chant (*Clap your hands*) that is easily translated into other languages. Each line is sung twice. By adding a fifth verse that repeats the first and having the children clap a friend's hands, a social interaction activity is included and music becomes an "inclusion facilitator."

1.Clap clap clap your hands, clap your hands together

2. Stomp stomp stomp your feet, stomp your feet on the floor

3. Nod nod nod your head, nod your head up and down

4. Shake shake shake your head, shake your head from side to side.

(5. Shake shake shake a friend's hand, shake your hands up and down).

By clapping a friend's hand, by nodding to another child, and by shaking hands, the children are encouraged to interact with one another. The interaction promotes motor, language, and cognitive skills as well as group cohesiveness and cooperation, qualities that may be said to reflect "Music and Inclusion: A Performance Partnership."

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Signature: Sylvia S Martin	Printed Name/Position/Title: Sylvia S Martin Assistant Professor Special Education	
Organization/Address: University of Houston - Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd. Houston, TX 77058-1098	Telephone: 281 283 - 3561	Fax: 281 326 - 1250
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